Great Minds Think Alike

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Great Minds Think Alike

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Summary

Clarice and Will bond over being Jack's prize members of the team, and Frederick stirs things up.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

A smile full of teeth.

A hand on Will's cheek, tracing over the scar in reverence.

Dark eyes with love burning bright in the irises, leaning in close enough to feel hot breath against his lips.

Sticky, red blood smeared across both of their faces as the smell of the sea fills his nostrils.

It's beautiful.

"Will, are you listening to me?"

Will's eyes snap open and he glares over at Frederick from the other side of the glass. It makes him feel better to see him visibly recoil as he sits up.

"No," he states plainly, rolling his eyes. "Do you have anything worthwhile to say today as opposed to yesterday?"

"I'm just asking about the trauma you must have sustained during your, shall we say, *forced* nuptials?"

Sweet pomegranate seeds, a bottle of spilled white Zinfandel dripping from the bedside table, hands twisting together in the pristine white sheets …

Will blinked his thoughts away and kept his expression blank. "Frederick, I would rather throw myself off *another* cliff before I talk about my personal life with you."

Frederick tapped his pen three times against his clipboard, annoyingly. Will considered jamming it into his jugular vein.

"All I wish to do is *help* you, Will." Will could taste the insincerity in those words and let himself smile.

"You want a new subject for a book, Frederick, don't play nice with me. It's not in your nature," Will says, not bothering to hold back an eye roll as he moved closer to the glass, smile turning sinister, baring teeth. "Come *closer*, up against the glass, I'll tell you every *filthy* little detail you want."

He watches the thought pass through Frederick's mind as he seriously considered the offer before he sneered. "How stupid do you think I am?"

"Would you like me to answer honestly?" Poking back, it made the days slightly more tolerable when he wasn't allowed to live behind closed eyes. Frederick worked his jaw and was about to fire back with a comment when the guard approached.

“Dr. Chilton, Jack Crawford and his new girl are ready for their appointment.”

Frederick nods for the guard to bring them in as he stands, putting on a smile that could make your skin crawl.

“Agent Crawford, *Miss* Starling,” he drawls as both of them come into the room. “A pleasure to see you both. Will, you remember Miss Starling.”

“No,” Will says simply, flopping back on the cot. “I remember an *Agent* Starling, Frederick. And I also remember telling *you,* Jack, that I don't want any visitors.”

“Starling is here for your assistance on a case,” Jack states, and Will watches Frederick saying something in a lower tone to Clarice, and her eyes unamused as she pinches the file from his hand. He could respect that, and before long, it was just him and Clarice.

“Agent Starling,” he nods.

“Mr. Graham,” she nods back, unfolding her file and pulling a pencil from behind her ear, looking up at him. He gave her a look back, waiting for her to continue.

She chewed on the edge of the pen, and then sighed. “Honestly, I don’t know why Agent Crawford keeps putting me in front of you. He told me that you can help me find Buffalo Bill, but-”

“That’s not why he *really* sent you,” Will replied, propping himself on his elbows and looking at her through the glass. “He sent you here because he thinks that I’m broken and he can’t use me to peek behind the curtain of the killer’s mind. That’s what he has you for,” he says with a smile that holds no sentiment behind it. “Tell me: is he *borrowing* your imagination?”

Clarice has grey eyes, he notes, and there is still a spark of hope and optimism behind the stormclouds. Her voice is confident, unafraid. “He did not tell me that when he brought me onto the case, Mr. Graham. He simply told me that he wanted a new set of ears.”

“Jack has access to hundreds of agents with functioning ears,” Will scoffs. “But you must be able to hear something that other people cannot. What do you hear?”

Her eyes close of their own accord as Will scratches an itch on his cheek scar. He notices with interest that her hand reaches up and scratches her own cheek as her eyes open again.

“Is it true that you can see through a killer’s eyes?” she asks instead of answering his question. After years of living with Hannibal, that sort of thing doesn’t faze him. He nods once, and she worries her bottom lip with her teeth. “Yeah, well, I feel like I can hear their victims. The screaming, the pain.”

Will pulls at a thread on his jumpsuit, and he can feel the nerves throbbing underneath her skin. He knows what it’s like to sense more than the people around you.

“How are you holding up?” he asks sincerely. She shrugs, adjusting the zipper on her jacket.

“As well as I can. But there’s a lot of - pain - that follows me around. Not from the case, from...*you*.”

“What kind of pain?”

“Your pain,” she states, very matter-of-fact. She’s good at remaining logical, distancing herself from her casework. Something he himself was never good at. “Every time I’m in front of you, it’s like a heavy weight is pressing down on my chest, making it hard to breathe, to focus. You’re in pain because you lost someone.”

“I did.”

Clarice’s eyes have a spark to them now. “Jack still thinks that you were brainwashed, trapped in Cuba all those years. What was your relationship, if I can ask?”

The hotel in Varadero, the oceanside view, tequila sunrises over a Cuban sunset, the bed that only squeaked louder as their neighbor complained to the front desk, the ropa vieja they made from him the next week.

He brought himself back to the present with a slight smile. “Intimate.”

“In the physical sense?”

“In all senses.”

They don’t say much of anything after that, just looking at each other, observing the other in their current habitat, like an animal in a zoo. They are not comfortable there, it is not where they thrive. But there is a kindred spirit between them, in their mutual over sensory, unable to turn the switch off and revel in silence for once. And truly, in that brief moment, observing each other and remaining quiet, there is a sense of peace between the former and the new profiler.

Until Jack comes back in and barks out that they found a body in the river and it’s probably Bill and we need to pack up and leave *now.* Will raises an annoyed eyebrow as Clarice gathers her papers together.

“Do me a favor, Jack?”

Jack looks up with a severe expression on his face. Will smiles, a sad little smile that is reminiscent of when he first started working for him, all glasses and plaid. He blinks and just for a second, Jack could swear that he can see the same knowing look Hannibal is famous for before Will speaks again.

“Don’t let her get too close.”

Jack turns away, unwilling to look him in they eye, and is instead forced to confront the image of Clarice swallowing two aspirins dry, rubbing her left temple. He has another flashback of the old Will and roughly pushes it away, talking over his own thoughts and leading Clarice away. Will closes his eyes and lets his thoughts wander again.

Opera box, pressed suits, martinis and whiskey sours, darkness, leaning in too close, trying to be quiet.

Hannibal had an interest in Clarice, more than purely scientific, Frederick noted in reviewing the tapes of their interactions. He had gotten her to cry, gotten her to open up, and yet she was determined to keep going back and demanding answers she was never going to get at this rate. Hannibal was having his fun with his new little plaything, it would seem. Prodding and poking and teasing, smiling at her dry remarks. And she kept bouncing back after each hit, one could admire her tenacity.

It was during their most recent session that Frederick caught wind of the idea of the FBI bribing Lecter to tell them about Buffalo Bill. Clarice was offering a better institution (rude), a cell with a window, music, anything to make him more comfortable. He had gently denied that and continued asking about her father's murder.

The FBI didn't have what Hannibal wanted, but Frederick did.

So that was why he was attempting to have another session with Hannibal that was going absolutely nowhere. "Explain your fascination with Miss Starling, Hannibal."

"She is a highly competent young woman, who shows incredible promise and does not appreciate the looks you send her way," Hannibal replies. Frederick changes the topic.

"Are you planning to make her your new Will Graham?"

Hannibal's eyes grow cold. "There is no replacement for Will, Frederick. Clarice is her own unique person, you understand."

Frederick abruptly closed his notebook, and rose from his chair. "Why aren't you cooperating with the FBI, you obviously know who they are looking for."

"There are no benefits or disadvantages for me to catch their killer," Hannibal stated plainly, containing a sketch of a Cuban sunset. "It is not my place to assist them."

"But you *know."*

"You cannot be certain of that, Frederick."

Frederick removes an envelope from his suit pocket. "Oh, you *do* know. And you're going to tell me."

"Amusing. You have nothing that I want."

"Are you certain of that?" Frederick smirks, opening the envelope and pulling out two wedding rings attached by a chain and notes with satisfaction as Hannibal's eyes widen a fraction. He lets the rings dangle in front of him like teasing a cat with a feather toy. "If you tell me who Buffalo Bill is, I'll let you *keep* them in your cell. Or I suppose the FBI could toss them back into evidence for a while before melting them down."

For a moment, pure black hatred crosses Hannibal's expression, before he calms himself, setting down his pen and resting his hands against the desk. His mouth upticks into a smile before nodding.

"I think that is a fair bargain, Frederick. I'll tell you what you would like to hear."

Clarice had an exam in three weeks, she should be fucking studying. But no, she gets an email from Jack Crawford in the afternoon about a potential subject, someone named Billy Rubin. An old patient of Lecter's, blonde, around thirty-five, lived in the Philadelphia area. She was to find everything about him and report back to the FBI at six o'clock tomorrow. So now she was stuck in her shitty apartment with a pack of cigarettes and diving deep into patient files and the Internet.

"You missed study group," Ardelia asked, concerned as she hung up her coat on the hook before heading over to where her girlfriend was typing on her computer. She got around behind her and rested her arms on her shoulders, kissing her cheek. "What's my favorite girl up to?"

"Falling down the FBI's rabbit hole of suspects," she sighed, turning and kissing her girlfriend, who fake coughed.

"Chain-smoking, huh? Warn a girl next time."

"Stress-smoking," Clarice fired back, lighting up another. "Apparently Lecter gave Chilton a name for Bill, but I'm not finding anything on this guy."

Ardelia quickly made some dinner, some quick chili that was far better than dining hall meatloaf, and scooted a bowl over to her girlfriend and picking up a file. "Need another set of eyes?"

Clarice nodded, and both girls ate and scanned over every file. This went on past dinner, past half a pack of Oreos, and two cups of tea before Clacie suddenly threw her file at the wall and smacked herself on the forehead. "Mother*fucker,* the fucking idiot-"

"Woah, what are you talking about?" Ardelia asked, grabbing her hand to calm her down. "Did you find-"

"There's going to be *nothing* to find," Clarice groaned. "We're taking this seriously, when I should have sat down and thought, 'why would he tell Frederick Chilton anything,' he hates the man with a passion."

"So are you saying that this Billy Rubin-"

"Does not exist," Clarice sighed. Ardelia thought about the name, thinking back to her human biology class when something dawned on her.

“No, Billy Rubin *does* exist. Just not the way we’re thinking.”

Clarice pushes her way into Chilton's office, effectively startling both the doctor and Jack Crawford as she interrupted their meeting. “Starling-”

“You sent me,” she says lowly, taking steps forward and ready to fucking scream and/or laugh at the absurdity of the situation. “On a goddamn wild goose chase to find a useless suspect.”

“What do you-” Clarice cuts him off with a wave of her hand and a short, bitter laugh.

“Billy Rubin is not a patient of Dr. Lecter’s, he’s a fucking *joke.”*

The room goes silent before Chilton speaks up again. *“Excuse* me, don’t you-”

“Agent Crawford, Dr. Chilton, ‘Billy Rubin’ is pun on the compound bilirubin. It’s a pigment in feces. Only truly visible when there's an overabundance of in the system, causing a jaundiced skin tone.” She takes her file and presses it hard against Jack’s chest so he takes it from her, shock in his eyes. She looks at both men and rolls her eyes, unable to hold back another laugh.

“Billy Rubin was not a suspect, gentlemen. That was Dr. Lecter telling you that you are both cowardly *and* full of shit.”

And she turned on her heel and walked out the door, down the hallways, until she is standing before Hannibal Lecter. Hannibal looks up from where he is turning Will’s wedding ring over and over in his hands, and smiles at her.

“Hello. Clarice. What a pleasant surprise. May I ask about the purpose of your visit?”

Clarice sighed deeply, rubbing at her temple again, but unable to fight the smallest smile tugging at the sides of her mouth. *“Billy Rubin?* Very *funny,* doctor.”

“I am glad you saw the humor in my jest,” Hannibal says lightly, clearly enjoying this, even more so when Frederick comes into her room, flustered and angrily sputtering out how he is revoking every privilege Hannibal has for a week, and is this close to leaving him in as close to a drugged-up coma as he is even slightly legally permitted. Hannibal ignores this, instead pressing a kiss to the ring and looking up with an innocent look on his face.

“Oh, Frederick, I’d calm down if I were you, I can practically *see* the smoke escaping from your ears.” A pause, then a slow smirk. “Forgive me, was that in poor taste?”

This time, Clarice hides her smile in her water bottle.

Hannibal takes all of his revoked privileges in stride, allowing himself to be strapped into a straightjacket for several hours as his cell is completely cleaned out. His eyes close and lets beautiful memories flood his field of vision.

Brown curls, teasing words, shattered wineglass, cool marble against skin, oven timer going off at inopportune times.

End Notes

Now, I cannot take credit for the 'Billy Rubin' pun, it is from the Silence of the Lambs book, which you should go read if you haven't yet!

Please, please leave all the comments and kudos galore! I love responding to them!

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